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**Lt. Governor Bohlinger & Commerce Director Present Over
\$444,000 in Economic Development Funds to Great Falls
Airport Project**

(HELENA) – Today Lieutenant Governor John Bohlinger and Montana Department of Commerce Director Anthony Preite presented a total of \$444,866 to AvMax Montana, Inc. and the Great Falls International Airport Authority for a joint expansion project. AvMax received a Workforce Training Grant (WTG) of \$179,866 and the Great Falls International Airport Authority received a Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund (BSTF) grant of \$265,000.

“Governor Brian Schweitzer and I are extremely proud to see this type of economic development in Great Falls because it means Montana’s on the move,” said Lt. Governor Bohlinger. “These grants will create 74 new, good paying jobs with benefits and help expand a project that’s beneficial to the airport and the Great Falls community.”

“These grants are excellent examples of how public and private funds can be leveraged to create opportunities for the people of Montana,” said Director Preite. “These grants are solid economic investments that will bring business into Great Falls and help train new employees for great jobs.”

AvMax will use the \$179,866 in WTG funds to hire and train 74 new employees for Phase 2 and Phase 3 of its expansion project at the Great Falls International Airport. New employee wages will range between \$15.50 and \$28.50 per hour plus benefits. This exceeds the average wage for Cascade County of \$14.20 per hour.

In April 2006, AvMax opened a new heavy maintenance and repair facility for regional aircraft (30 – 90 seats) at the Great Falls International Airport. In July 2006, during Phase 1 of its expansion plan, the company received \$205,000 in WTG funds for training of up to 98 employees.

AvMax is currently in Phase 2 and Phase 3 of its expansion plan. Phase 2 will create a second hangar for mechanic operations and additional office space. Phase 3 will create a new paint hangar for plane maintenance.

The Great Falls International Airport Authority will use the \$265,000 grant from the BSTF to purchase equipment for the new paint hangar that will be leased to AvMax as part of the AvMax expansion. The BSTF Program requires grant recipients to give 1 to 1 matching funds.

At Governor Schweitzer's request, the 60th Montana Legislature increased funding for WTG from \$1.4 million annually, to nearly \$4 million annually. This legislation was strongly supported by most Great Falls area legislators. The program was designed to assist established businesses and new businesses in their expansion efforts. It is targeted toward businesses that create at least one net, new job that pays at least the lower of the current county average or the current state average. That wage can include fringe benefits. New employees must work at least thirty-five hours per week year round. Program applicants must demonstrate that at least fifty percent of their sales originate outside of Montana. The maximum funding available to train a single employee is \$5,000.

The Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund (BSTF) program is a state-funded program created by the 2005 Legislature. It is designed to aid in the development of good paying jobs for Montana residents and promote long-term stable economic growth in Montana.

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